

Cape Town Death-Squad Inquiry Opens

By JOHN F. BURNS

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CAPE TOWN, March 5 — A secret South African military unit suspected of killing opponents of apartheid planned at one time to replace the heart pills of Nelson Mandela's lawyer with tablets designed to induce a heart attack, a judicial inquiry was told today.

In a day of bizarre testimony, the inquiry, which opened today, was told that the military unit, known as the Civil Cooperation Bureau, also once planned to send a baboon fetus to Archbishop Desmond M. Tutu, the 58-year-old Nobel Peace Prize winner and Anglican primate of southern Africa. Evidence before the inquiry showed that the plan was code-named Operation Ape. Ape is the Afrikaans word for ape.

Another bureau plan was said to have involved "tampering" with the luggage of the Rev. Frank Chikane, general secretary of the South African Council of Churches, an anti-apartheid umbrella group. The extent of the reported tampering was not specified.

No Details Given

The chief lawyer for the inquiry, Timothy McNally, who is Attorney General of the Orange Free State, said the odd assortment of schemes was revealed in confessions made to police investigators. The confessions were reportedly made by former officers arrested on suspicion of killings linked to the Civil Cooperation Bureau. No details of the plans were given, but from the references to them made by Mr. McNally it appeared that none of the proposals were carried out.

Under questioning by Mr. McNally, Lieut. Gen. Rudolph Badenhorst, head of military intelligence for the South African Defense Force, said an internal military inquiry had established that the bureau was responsible for two bomb blasts in recent years, one of them at an early-learning center in Athlone, a mixed-race area outside Cape Town, the other at a store in Pretoria, the administrative capital, operated by a man identified only as Marius. Apparently, there were no deaths in either blast.

The disclosures before the inquiry, coming after weeks of newspaper reports about the Civil Cooperation Bureau, appeared likely to intensify the problems that the affair has created for President F. W. de Klerk. Mr. de Klerk said last week that he had not known of the bureau's existence until he was informed of it by the Defense Minister, Magnus A. Malan, in January.

Tonight, Mr. Malan, a retired general who has rejected demands for his resignation in the scandal, issued a statement saying he had also learned of the bureau's existence only recently, when General Badenhorst informed him of it in "late November."

Chief of Bureau Arrested

The day's testimony, at a church auditorium in Pretoria, also revealed that Col. Joe Verster, identified as the head of the Civil Cooperation Bureau, was arrested Friday by police investigators looking into the deaths of Anton Lubowski and David Webster, two anti-apartheid activists who were shot to death last year. Mr. Lubowski was killed in Windhoek, the capital of Namibia, and Mr. Webster in Johannesburg. Colonel Verster is being held under a section of the Internal Security Act that has generally been used to detain anti-apartheid activists.

The arrest of Colonel Verster, in a raid that required police officers to scale a nine-foot wall at the colonel's Pretoria home, apparently took place without the knowledge or co-operation of the defense force, which is said to have been feuding with the police since the existence of the Civil Cooperation Bureau became publicly known last month.

According to an account of Colonel Verster's arrest given to the inquiry today, the police unit involved was able to locate the colonel only after extensive sleuthing, despite the fact that several former policemen working for the colonel have been named in court documents as suspects in the killings of Mr. Lubowski and Mr. Webster.

At today's session, lawyers for the inquiry put forth a list of 71 politically linked killings that have not been solved, some of them going back to 1977.

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